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1820

NOTES SUGGESTED FROM A PERUSAL OF SIR
J. MALCOLM'S REVENUE REPORT ON MALWA.

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Notes suggested from a perusal of Sir J. Malcolm's Revenue Report* on Malwa and sent to the Resident, November 1820. *Not traceable.

No. 1.—In this part of the country it appears to me that the proprietary right in the soil is universally admitted to be vested in the Sovereign and that his right to raise rents is never disputed.

The tenures on which Kisans cultivate are so loose and uncertain that it is difficult to define them satisfactorily. It appears to me that the utmost they can claim or ever so claim is right of occupancy or cultivation subject to payment of the demand of the Government whatever they may be. This claim, which is apparently of no value, is founded on the general usage of the country, and as long as a Kisan is able or willing to meet the demands of the Sirkar it would be reckoned unjust to remove him and he never is removed. When he cannot do this, his lands, even if they have been cultivated by his family for generations, are put up as a matter of course to the highest bidder.

It is a common saying amongst the people of the country that a *Ryat* is only *Malik* of his own field for one year, all claims being supposed to expire at the end of the season.

A preferable right of cultivation subject to the payment of indefinite demands may be considered a right of no value. When the rents are moderate it is of some value, that is, Kisans find it worth their while to remain on the lands cultivated by their forefathers.

The rights of the Ryats in the Doumlee districts and in those parts of the country which have been subject to the Moghol Government and into which the revenue system has been introduced, do not differ from those of their neighbours about Nagpore. The Kisans there do not claim a property in the soil or an hereditary right of occupancy subject to the payment of a fixed rent.

In fact a Ryat in this country only acquires in the soil by a direct grant from the Government. He may dig wells, plant trees, cut down jungle and improve the lands in other ways, but if he refuses to pay the demands of the Sirkar he is dispossessed.

No. 2.—This name is unknown in Deogurh, where the zamindars are termed Desmookhs and Despandias. In the districts about Nagpore they are supposed to have received their grants from the Gond Rajah Bukht Bulund. Their office in many of these districts was suppressed by Raghojee and Janojee who resumed the dues of the zamindars amounting to $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the jumma and annexed them to the regular revenue.

In the Doumlee districts and generally wherever the Moghol power has been established they still retain all their rights and perquisites, but their functions are by no means so important as in Malwa.

The zamindars in this part of the country claim an extraordinary privilege which a Native Government would scarcely have allowed them to exercise to any great extent. The Desmookh claims the right of succession to Patelees of villages when the Patel dies without leaving an heir and the Despandia to that

of the office of Pandia when the Pandia dies without an heir. This right is not well founded, but as the heavy assessments of late years have forced many of the old Patels to abandon their villages the zamindars have taken advantage of this circumstance to get hold of a great number of them.

The zamindars never appear to have been employed as Police Officers. Under the Marhatta Government the only use that has been made of them, has been to regulate the details of the Sirkar's assessment and persuade the Patels to submit to it. The collections were always made by Kamaeesdars appointed by the Government which was too jealous to leave much power in the hands of officers over whom they did not ever use a direct control.

Their lands and dues in the lapse of time become subdivided into numerous shares and they are constantly quarrelling about them and the right of successions. These disputes were encouraged by the Marhatta Government, specially by the last Raghojee, who under the pretence of interfering for their adjustment laid hold of the plea to extort heavy fines and sometimes to plunder them altogether.

The zamindars agree in stating that the sunnads of their offices were originally conferred on either by the Moghol Emperors generally by Shah Jehan or some of its officers as a reward for some specific services and some of them appear to have come originally from Hindostan with the Moghol officers. There is no tradition amongst them of their having been the hereditary officers of any old Hindoo Government.

No. 3.—The assistant of the zamindar in this part of the country and throughout Berar (I believe) is termed Mohureer.

No. 4.—The function of the Naeek-warree in the Doumlee districts and in Berar correspond with those of the Merdah. He is also a Musalman and a Wuttendar.

No. 5.—In Deogurh the Patels are all Ijardars. The heavy assessments of late years have all swallowed up their Enaum and other perquisites and left them scarcely any valuable privileges. They are therefore generally not much attached to their villages especially in the districts about Nagpore where the pressure of taxation has been the greatest. In the more remote districts such as those on the banks of the Wyne Ganga there are many old Patels still remaining who retain something like an Enaum and who are much attached to their villages. In every district about Nagpore there are still four or five hereditary Patels, that is Patels whose villages have descended to them through several generations and who amidst all the changes that have taken place have managed to retain their villages. They are called Perekkee Patel and are considered to have something like an hereditary right of occupancy. The Government has always shown a greater degree of consideration for this class than for the common Ijardars.

Whilst I was employed in making the late settlements a vast number of villages were open to competition. Few of the old Patels came forward to bid for them and there are still a great many unoccupied. The population of the country may have diminished but the heavy assessments have never forced the Ryats to emigrate to other countries.

In the Doumlee districts and in that part of the country into which the Moghol system of revenue has been introduced, the Patels are all Wuttendars. They are strongly attached to their rights which they can alienate by sale, mortgage, etc., and never part with them excepting when reduced to the greatest distress. They are sometimes obliged to resign their villages from the pressure of debt or other causes, but they have a claim to re-admission at almost any period, however distant, on securing to the cultivating Patel the recovery of his advances of seed, etc., to the Ryots.

No. 6.—The Pandia in this part of the country. He receives an allowance from the Government, but he is dismissed or retained at the pleasure of the Patel. The same Pandia often keeps the accounts of several villages when they are small. If the Patel is a Brahmin and active, he keeps the accounts himself. In the Doumlee districts they are Wuttendars and cannot be removed by the Patel.

No. 7.—All these duties are performed by the Cutwal in this part of the country.

No. 8.—The attachment of the soil is not nearly so strong in this country as in Malwa, and its absence may perhaps in a great measure be ascribed to the insecurity of the tenures on which Ryots cultivate, and of anything like a proprietary right to the soil.

Since the conquest of the country by the Marhattas, the assessments have been constantly increasing and all ideas of anything like permanent rates have been destroyed. The great body of the cultivators, more particularly in the districts about Nagpore, cannot be said to be strongly attached to the soil. They frequently change their residence and the interchanges of lands amongst them have been numerous. Great changes have also taken place amongst the Patels, who are all ljjardars and of very recent standing. This attachment is strongest when they have planted trees or dug wells, and it is only in instances of this kind that removal is complained of.

No. 9.—In the districts about Nagpore there is a great deal of exchanging of lands which takes place amongst the Ryots every year. At the Estimalut many of the lands are open to competitions, every person being at liberty to throw up those he cultivated last year; when a field is let to another person the name of the last occupant is struck out. Each field has a separate name which is never changed. A Ryot cannot let his field to another person. This can only be done by the Patel.

Notwithstanding the rapid increase in the rates of rents which have taken place within the last 20 years, there are still many Ryots who continue to cultivate the lands occupied by their forefathers, paying the increased rates as they are assessed. The best class of Ryots have as far as 10 ploughs. Their capital is too small to admit of their speculation in waste lands.

No. 10.—The name for Ryots of this description is Paekar, and they are supposed to form about a third or a fourth of the whole body of cultivators. The advantages they possess over the more permanent cultivators are exemptions from begarees, gratuitous services, furmaesha. Ryots of this description are

generally to be found in the principal towns of the district and in populous villages where there are no waste land, and there are most number of Paekarees in the city who cultivate lands all over the country. As long as any portions of the lands of a village remain uncultivated the Patel will not allow the Ryots to become Paekarees, that is, to cultivate lands in another village.

No. 11.—There is a class of people in this part of the country not always cultivators who are termed Sookhbashee and Sookhwastee. A man who resides in a village without any specific employment in it, who does not contribute to its revenue in any way, and who derives his subsistence independent of it, is a Sookhwastee. Another class, the Ooperees or most improvident kind of cultivators, wander about from one village to another getting the Patel to lend them money, seed, grain, etc. They often fail in their payments and abscond after the harvest, leaving the Patel to pay the rents.

No. 12.—The Marhattas do not appear fond of granting permanent alienations of land, but they have usually respected the grants of former Rulers at least those of the Musulmans. They have never interfered with the Wuttendar lands and dues of Zamindars, Patels and other hereditary officers in the districts on the Wurda.

Alienations of this kind are more frequent in Berar and in districts on the Wurda than in Deogurh, as the undermentioned statement will show :—

Pergunah Kalmisar in Deogurh.

Total number of fields	...	...	3,236
Enam lands—			
Joshees	...	...	63
Gosacens	...	...	11
Bhoomucks	...	...	5
Garpugarees	...	...	1
Cutwals	...	...	69
Peerzadas	...	...	2
Rajah's relations and persons about the Court	...	...	152
			<hr/> 303
			<hr/> 2,933

or about one-eleventh.

The lands held by the Rajah's relations, etc., are not permanent alienations but may be resumed at pleasure.

Pergunnah Ashtee on the Wurda.

Total number of Bighas	...	...	170,076
Enam lands—			
Zamindars, etc.	...	...	6,909
Patels lands	...	...	20,480
Dhirwar	...	...	1,367
Cauzees, Peerzadas, and other religious persons	...	...	1,082
Brahmins, Joshees	...	...	195
Cutwals, Bhoomucks	...	...	4,032
			<hr/> 34,065
			<hr/> 136,011

or about a fifth.

No. 13.—In Deogurh the invariable practice was to levy 12 annas in the rupee from the Patels in the months of October, November and December. This payment was called the Paokerree, and the whole of it was usually advanced by Sahookars to the Patels and Ryots at an interest of 25 per cent. The remaining kist of 4 annas was levied in March and April. This mode of collection was uniform in all the districts and had no reference to the predominance or otherwise of the Rubbee or Khureef crop.

No. 14.—The rents in Deogurh have always been paid to the Government in money, and the Ryots, excepting the poorest classes, pay their rents to the Patel also in money. Buttye Settlements between the Patels and the Ryots were not uncommon, and they were generally made on account of the Sirkar. The Patel did not consider them advantageous and only had recourse to them when he could not draw rent from the land in any other way; when lands were likely to remain uncultivated the Patel advanced seed and subsistence to a Ryot who undertook to cultivate them for half the produce, or a Ryot undertook to cultivate them and after the proportion for seed and expenses had been set aside the remaining quantity was divided between him and the Patel. The Patel carried his share to the account of the Government as part of the jumma of the village.

No. 15.—Some idea may be formed of the additional imposts of the Marhattas from the following statement. The Ayen assessment of the Gond Rajahs is here stated at 100 rupees and all the additional imposts have been on this Ayen.

		Rs.	a.	p.
Ayen assessments of Gond Rajahs	...	100	0	0
Additional assessment of 1st Raghojee...	...	79	7	0
Total	...	179	7	0
Additional assessment of Janjee on Ayen	...	134	0	0
Total	...	313	7	0
Additional assessment of Moodhajee on Ayen	...	35	0	0
Total	...	348	7	0
Additional assessment of Raghojee on Ayen	...	131	4	0
GRANT TOTAL	...	479	11	0

These additional imposts are all on the Ayen, each Rajah not only continued the extra assessment of his predecessors but added to them his own puttees or extra imposts. They are all assessed by the Wirar Pandias and the increase is supposed to be proportioned to the Ayen Jumma of each field. A great deal of partiality has, however, been practised, and the burthen of them has fallen heaviest on the lands and villages of the poorer classes. The variations on the original rates of assessments are great, and it is impossible to refer them to any

Vide No. 9 infra

intelligible standard. The Ayen assessment of some lands is a cowree, an anna, a rupee or it is sometimes cultivated on the pand which refers to a nominal measurement.

This immense increase appears, however, only to have kept pace with the rise in prices of grain as the undermentioned statement will show :—

				Rs.
In the time of Bukht Bulund the price of grain was 2 khundees of 160 pylees each				
In the time of first Rughojee, per khundee	...	...	...	1
Do. of Janojee, per khundee	...	...	...	1
Do. of Moodhaje, per khundee	...	...	...	2
Do. of Raghojee 2nd, per khundee	...	...	...	3
				5, 6, 7 and 8

The Ryots often complain of the heavy rates, but I am inclined to think frequently without cause ; on many lands they are evidently very light.

The assessment is never on the produce. It seems generally to be regulated with reference to the supposed fertility of the soil. The dhara or rate of every field is known or pretty nearly so, and if this is paid the cultivator may raise what produce he pleases.

No. 16.—The grains given in advance to Ryots for subsistence are Joaree and the low-priced grains of the Khureef crop. They are generally repaid with an interest of 25 per cent, but in the Doumlee districts with 50 per cent. When advances of Joaree and other grains of this season for seed are made the rate is a pylee and a half for each pylee lent. The reason of this is that Sahookars rarely store seed grain of this description, the Ryots almost always keeping a sufficient stock of their own for sowing. Joaree kept for seed must also be stored with great care and the whole of the grain of this season are liable to a greater degree of wastage than those of the Rubbee crops, Dhan or rice, in the husk, but for seed is invariably repaid at the rate of a pylee and a half for every pylee lent.

Seed advances of wheat chana and the grains of the Rubbee crops, although the most valuable, are always repaid with *savaee* or an interest of 25 per cent. These grains are said to be more easily preserved than those of the Khureef crops.

Tuccavee advances for the purchase of cattle, etc., are also repaid with an interest of 25 per cent. Almost the whole of the Ryots depend on Sahookars for seed grains, subsistence and money advances for the payment of their rents.

No. 17.—Joaree, wheat, chana and grains of the Rubbee and Khureef harvests are never watered either from well or dams. The rains generally afford a sufficient supply for the Khureef harvest, but the want of water is frequently felt for the Rubbee crops. I have spoken to many Patels and cultivators on the advantages they might derive from watering the wheat and other grains of the Rubbee harvest and endeavoured to explain to them that the expense of digging wells and making bunds would be more than compensated by the additional produce. The invariable reply was that they depended on the rains, which had never yet deserted them altogether, and that as water was seldom to be found near the surface, the expense of digging wells would be enormous.

Three very bad seasons are only spoken of within the last 50 years. There have been many indifferent seasons, but with the exceptions above mentioned, none so bad as to occasion any particular distress. Irrigation for the Rubbee crops might, I should think, often be resorted to with the utmost advantage and as the condition of the people improves they will probably have recourse to it.

The constant fluctuations in the rent, the insecurity of tenures, and the want of anything like a proprietary or hereditary right in the land are perhaps the real causes which have prevented the introduction of a more improved mode of cultivation. The Ryots are so averse to investing any part of their capital in the lands, that I have even found it impracticable to prevail on the cultivators in villages on the public roads to surround their fields with fences to protect them against travellers. When urged to do so, the common reply was that this would be useless as the field might belong to some one else next year.

No. 18.—Wheat in good soil and in a favourable season without irrigation gives a return of 10, but the general rate is from 5 to 8 or 9.

Joaree gives as far as 40 and generally ranges between 30 and 40. In Berar the return for Joaree is said to be 60 and even 80-fold.

If the accounts of the cultivators are to be credited the soil must have been much more productive formerly than at the present day. The decrease in its productive power they ascribe to the circumstance of its having been constantly under cultivation for such a number of years, and as neither fallows are allowed or any other effectual remedies applied to recruit the soil exhausted by continual cultivation, it is very likely the case.

It is asserted that when the Marhattas conquered the country the general returns for the Khureef crops were 100 and for the Rubbee 20-fold, but that they have been diminishing ever since.

No. 19.—The Sewace Jumma as extra revenue in Deogurh has remained stationary for many years, all the extra imposts of the Marhattas having been thrown on the lands.

The Sewace Jumma consists of the house taxes, imposts on shops, petty bazar dues, fines, confiscations, etc.

The additional imposts have invariably, as already mentioned, been on the Ayen Jumma of the lands and have been assessed with tolerable partiality. The smallest portion of the burthen has of course fallen on the lands and villages of the better classes, but scarcely any class has escaped altogether. All these imposts have originated in some exigency real or pretended, but although the exigency may have disappeared the tax has never been remitted; some of the most extraordinary of these imposts are the Joohar puttee imposed by Janojee to defray the expense of jewels purchased for one of his wives. The Zimputtee imposed by Raghojee to pay for a saddle studded with precious stones presented to the Peshwa. The Joa Puttee to cover the alleged losses of the Rajah at play one year at the Dewallee, etc.

No. 20.—The system in this country has generally been the amanee one, although for the last 20 years it has in point of fact come nearer to the farming

system than anything else. Districts however have never been farmed out for a longer period than one year, and the large advances have not therefore been demanded from Mamletdars. The system of late years has been this when a Mamletdar was appointed to the charge of a district he was obliged to pay advance of about 10 or 12 per cent of the jumma before the commencement of the collections. This sum he perhaps borrowed from a Sahookar and he was allowed by the Sirkar a deduction for interest at the rate of one per cent a month.

The collections commenced in September and 12 annas were usually collected before the end of November or December, but as money was required by the Government perhaps in July or September the Mamletdar was also obliged to get Sahookars to advance the whole sum of 12 annas at this period or to promise to pay it on the demand of the Sirkar. The Mamletdar again for this loan paid interest to the Sahookar at the rate of 2 per cent a month which he was also authorised to assess on the districts.

Sahookars sometimes contrived to make a double and treble profit in the same district. They made the advances to the Mamletdar, to the Patels of the district, and cashed the orders granted on them by the Rajah for the payment of troops, etc., at the same time, and had a separate profit on all transactions.

As almost all the revenue passed through their hands in some way or other they had great influence in all the districts which were governed with their agency.

No. 21.—The salaries of all the officers employed in the collection of the revenue were on a much smaller scale in Deogurh, but notwithstanding this the expenses of management are supposed not to have fallen much short of 20 per cent on the jumma, calculating all the elicit perquisites of the Revenue Officers.

It will be seen from the undermentioned statement that the authorised expenses of management did not exceed 6 per cent :—

			Rs.
Gross jumma of Deogurh	...	...	40,58,107
Deduct Jageer allotted for payment of troops	...	...	15,00,000
			<hr/>
	Khalizit revenue	...	25,58,107
Expenses of management—			
Allowances to Kumaeesdars	...	...	20,871
Allowance to Pharaoveeses with office at Nagpur	...	...	23,387
Mohurcers	...	...	2,770
Werar Pandias	...	...	7,808
Sebundies	...	...	42,297
Hurkarrah Establishment	...	...	6,457
Musalchees	...	...	2,546
Extra charges	...	...	39,191
			<hr/>
	Total	...	1,45,318

or about 6 per cent on the jumma.

The Kumaeesdars and the other Revenue Officers, however, had innumerable ways of amassing wealth. The real amount of fines, confiscations and nuzzers was never accounted for, and a great proportion of these collections were

embezzled. Burguns were levied under a variety of pretences and sometimes without the knowledge of the Government, and only a portion of the produce accounted for. The most common were those of Beeaj, Balta Roz, Khorakee, Durbar expenses, etc., etc.

It was calculated that a Kumaeesdar entrusted with the management of a district yielding a Revenue of a lakh of rupees could besides subsisting himself and his family, realise 3,000 rupees per annum, and Khattoo, without being guilty of gross malversation.

It was the custom of the Rajah to allow the Mamletdars to go on accumulating for several years and then either to plunder them or to extort a large fine.

No. 22.—The sale of grounds for the sites of houses either in towns or villages is not a source of revenue in this country. It is rarely ever sold for this purpose and a person is at liberty to build within certain limits in towns and villages, provided he can find a clear spot, without paying anything for the ground either to Government or individuals.

All houses with the exception of those of Brahmins, Rajpoots and Musulmans in the Civil and Military service of the State pay the usual Ghurkaree taxes; when a house is sold the Sirkar's Huk is a fourth of the price.

Fines and contributions have generally been levied from individuals and not from towns or particular classes.

Large contributions have however been extorted from the Sahookars at different times, and Appa Saheb attempted to levy one of 50 lakhs of rupees from the city and country.

No. 23.—Escheats (Maear) never appear to have yielded much revenue to this Government; a man's son, nephew, cousin, or in short any of his relations who may have been brought up in his house and had any share in the family wealth would in this part of the country inherit his property. If he leaves no sons, and if all his male relations have lived separately his property is then seized by the Government, but some provision is generally made for the widow. Almost all the revenue collected under the head of Maear has been derived from the sale of the effects of persons of the lower classes.

No. 24.—The last Raghojee Bhonsla established a system something like this, but on a much smaller scale. About 20 years ago a selection was made of nearly 200 flourishing villages in different parts of the country which were placed under the management of 4 or 5 agents immediately responsible to the Rajah. These were called Khasgee villages and some of the best fields in each were cultivated by the Rajah on his own account with his own stock and cattle, and a regular account of the produce and expenditure was kept by these managers, with assistance of other karkoons. Part of the produce supplied the consumption of the household and the surplus was stored in kothees at Nagpore and afterwards sold or lent out to the Ryats of Khasgee villages at the common interest of the country.

The stock of grain accumulated with great rapidity under this mode of management and the Rajahs latterly not only supplied the Ryots of the Khasgee villages with seed grain and Patga, but also those of many other villages in different parts of the country.

At the end of the year 1229 Fussilee, the stock of grain in the Khasgee villages was calculated to amount to 54,000 khundees, the value of which was not less than 3 lakhs of rupees.

It was a common practice with the Rajahs to force the Bunias of the city to purchase his superfluous stock of grain when the rates were high. The principal Bunias were summoned to the kothee and the quantity to be disposed of was distributed amongst them at an arbitrary valuation.

No. 25.—Grains of every description is sold by measure in this country, and this measure is founded on an equivalent for pice weights.

Almost everything also is sold by weight, and the varieties in the table of weight as great as in Malwa.

The usual grain measures are—

100 rupees	...	..	1 pylee.
8 pylees	...	...	1 cooroo.
20 cooroos	...	...	1 khundee.

These measures are founded on the standard rupee of the country, and although its weight may have varied at different times this circumstance is not supposed to have affected the measures.

The size of the pylee varies in every district. In some districts it weighs more than 100 rupees and in others less. The number of pylees to the cooroo and cooroos to the khundee never alter.

Grain dealers purchase by a large seer and retail by a small one. All other articles sold by weight or measure are purchased and sold on equal terms.

No. 26.—In this country the Saeer Revenue is seldom alienated. In one or two instances pensions have been granted out of it as a reward for building bazars, etc.

Alienations to an inconsiderable amount have been granted out of it at different times for charitable purposes to Cauzees, Peerazdas, Moolloks, Brahamins, Gosaeens, etc. People of this description have sometimes daily allowances from the Saeer Revenue of the district of a few annas for which they have received grants from the Gond Rajahs, officers of the Moghol Government and the Marhattas.

Zamindars and Patels have also petty dues in some instances.

The rates are in general well understood and they cannot be increased without the consent of the Government, but varieties in these rates with the claims of individuals to petty dues give rise to frequent disputes.

The present rates are generally those fixed by the Gond Rajah at some remote period and they are supposed to have remained unaltered until A. D. 1803. Since that time the duties on grain have been more than doubled. The duties on silks, gold cloths and other valuable manufactures have also been doubled, and in coarse cloths there has been an addition of 50 per cent.

The collection of this branch of the revenue is so precarious and so difficult to superintend that the farmer never keeps above one or two districts khas. If he contracts for the farm of a number of districts, he rents out the greater number of them to sub-farmers.

Seed grain and Potga never pay any duties in this country.

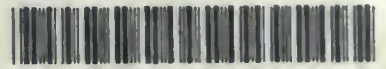
There are people in the city who contract to transport goods to all the principal towns or charts in the Dekhan and Hindustan, paying both the duties and hire of the cattle. Before the goods leave Nagpore the contractors make a separate agreement with the farmer of the Saeer Revenue of each district for a certain sum, and as the latter is afraid of the goods being sent by another road if he exacts the full amount of duties, he is obliged to take something less.

This practice of granting abatements in the rates or number of bullocks to contractors for Hindoo Bharrat has grown into a regular system, and the abatements for each road are nearly as well established, and understood as the duties themselves.

The abatement is granted by receiving duties for a smaller number of bullocks than actually pass; 100 bullocks are sometimes calculated at 50, 60, 65, etc., according to the particular usage of the district and the number varies at each chowkee.

The monopoly of this contract for the Amraotee road was once let for 24,000 rupees by the Rajah, and it has for many years past been in the hands of persons who paid a certain sum to the Government for the exclusive right of transacting the Hoonda Bhara business of the city.

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